

### *Families with Disability and Online Church*

Embracing Ministries aims to help churches rethink traditional methods of 'doing church' and as a result of COVID-19 many of us have also been forced to rethink these methods. While most of us would agree that meeting together face to face for Sunday services is the ideal, we have also realised that technology has been an incredible blessing during these days of social distancing. In fact, I have been surprised to discover that rather than just 'making do,' technology has actually provided opportunities for greater connection and inclusion for some church members. Some families living with disability have found, like our family, that online church has meant that their whole family has been able to 'attend' church together. Some parents have shared that while they feel like they are unable to commit to church rosters under normal circumstances, online church has provided new opportunities for them to be involved at church. Knowing they can serve from home – and possibly have the option of recording segments in advance of the service –



has given parents and siblings alike new opportunities to participate in rosters for Bible reading, prayers,

music and assisting with technology. For those parents who are usually concerned with their children causing disruptions because of their noises or movement, they have the ability to put themselves on mute if their church services are being run on real-time platforms like Zoom. This allows their children to make noises and move as they need to, while also allowing the family to connect with what is happening in the service.

Watching pre-recorded church services also means that families can have control over the length of time they sit down together meaning they can break up the service into smaller sections and come back to it through the day or even over a few days. Parents also have control over how loud the volume is for children who are sensitive to noise. A number of parents of children with special needs have also shared that the move to online meetings has provided them with the chance to attend mid-week Bible study groups which is usually an impossibility because of the complexities of their families. Some families have also seen that online services and Bible studies have helped to educate others in the church about the family's experiences of living with disability. By meeting together via Zoom, other church members have been able to see some of the challenges associated with raising children with special needs. This window into the lives of families living with disability has created greater empathy and understanding among their fellow parishioners. In some cases, it has also led kids and youth leaders to ask more questions about how they are able to serve the child with special needs through learning some basic sign language or

sending the families additional kids' church resources.

I pray that in our rush to 'get back to normal,' we don't forget to take the opportunity to consider those families



in our church communities who have experienced greater connection during the COVID-19 because of technology. For many families living with disability, they regularly miss out on the fellowship of Sunday services. While not ideal, online options do provide an opportunity to connect and meet together in a way that works for some families and is a far better option than simply not meeting together at all.

*By Louise Gosbell*

#### Contact Embracing Ministries

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# Embracing Ministries

An initiative of the Anglican Church of Canberra and Goulburn

June 2020

## Bishop's Visit

We would like to thank Bishop Mark for taking the time to attend our weekly Nations Heart worship circle on Zoom. We discovered what it means to be wonderfully made in Christ and how every one of us is made perfect in God's image.



The Embracing Ministries team are so excited to see our families face-to-face after 3 months of virtual programs. COVID-19 cleaners have been provided by Malkara to ensure the safety of our participants and that cleaning requirements are met.

**6 week term starting the week of the 3rd of August**



**Friday Minnows at SMIV: 10am**

*Saturday Programs at Malkara*

**Preschool Minnows: 9.30am**

**Primary Minnows: 10.30am**

**Bend and Stretch: 12.30 pm**

## Embracing Siblings

After a hiatus, Embracing Siblings is returning face-to-face from the 2nd of May 2020, where members will be participating in excursions, craft, games all while learning a range of coping techniques.

Our first excursion on the 2nd of August will be:



The Spring School Holiday Program is set to occur in the upcoming October holidays. A COVID-19 review will occur a week before the program to ensure the safety of participants and volunteers.

## Mentor



## Program

Embracing Ministries will be offering a range of training for volunteers, mentors and churches. Mentors are responsible for developing inclusive relationships with fellow peers possessing a

variety of intellectual, physical, developmental and sensory disabilities.

**26 September 2020**

**Safe ministries on Zoom**  
9:00am - 12:00pm

**Key word sign workshop**  
1:00pm

**3rd of October 2020**  
**PD Punk training**

**Luke 14 Tools for Inclusion workshops.**



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

Our Holiday programs success is down to its dedicated volunteers. We are searching for interested individuals, possessing a strong faith, to help with our upcoming Spring Holiday Program.

Volunteers would take on Leader roles to ensure the spiritual, emotional and social growth of our participants along with our Mentors.

ALL RETREATS

*Postponed*



Embracing Ministry supports and nurtures the spiritual life of all people, regardless of their abilities